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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6870
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0722
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4266
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7813
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5373
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3404
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1168
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001129

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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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SUBJECT: BURMA: WHAT DIALOGUE? JUST ARRESTS

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. According to an NLD spokesman, the regime has not responded to Aung San Suu Kyi's request for her to have additional, regular meetings with NLD officials. On November 20, authorities detained six more pro-democracy activists, four of whom remain in custody. One of the released detainees speculated the arrests could be an attempt to intimidate opposition activists to retract their criticism of the regime's "roadmap to democracy." U Gambira's mother declined an offer of assistance from pro-democracy lawyers, choosing instead to wait a few more weeks to see how her son's case develops. End Summary.

WAITING FOR DIALOGUE

¶2. (C) NLD spokesman U Nyan Win told us the regime has not informed them when party officials will next be able to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi, a right she has described as critical to the dialogue process. Neither has the government shown any willingness to accept the two liaisons Aung San Suu Kyi offered, according to U Nyan Win. Additionally, he reported regime liaison Aung Kyi has still made no attempt to independently contact the NLD. Nonetheless, he expressed hope that party leaders could meet with Aung San Suu Kyi within the next week, pointing out permission to do so is usually granted on short notice.

MORE ARRESTS

¶3. (C) Authorities arrested six pro-democracy activists on November 20. Four still remain in custody. Police arrested Zomi National Congress president Pu Chin Sian Thang at his home on the morning of November 20, according to family members. Despite assurances from police that he would be released later that afternoon, family members have not heard from him in over 24 hours. Authorities have neither acknowledged his arrest nor revealed where he is being held. This is the second time Pu Chin Sian Thang has been detained in as many months. In early November he was released after having been detained and interrogated for 33 days.

¶4. (C) NLD spokesman U Han Thar Myint told us NLD MP-elect Dr. Myint Naing was taken from his home in Sagaing Division the afternoon of November 20. Embassy contacts said they believe he is being interrogated at the Shwe Bo Township Government Guest House although authorities have not acknowledged his arrest and no one has heard from him since he was taken yesterday.

¶5. (C) Family members reported authorities arrested seventy-year-old Rakhine pro-democracy activist U Ohn Tin and sixty-year-old Kachin activist Khun Tu in their respective homes on the evening of November 20. Their family members told us they have not heard from them since then and do not know where they were taken. Both men had worked with the Embassy closely in the past and are well respected in their communities.

¶6. (C) Two other pro-democracy activists, Arakan League for Democracy Joint Secretary U Aye Thar Aung and NLD MP-elect U Soe Win, reported that they were taken from their homes the morning of November 20 and held at Aung Tha Byay Interrogation Center before being released at noon. They told us authorities informed them they would be interviewed by a senior police official, but no one came to question them during their four-hour detention. Both men are now at home.

¶7. (C) While authorities have neither acknowledged nor given a reason for these detentions, U Aye Thar Aung pointed out that four of those arrested were involved in drafting a letter to UNSYG Ban Ki Moon on August 1 proposing an alternative to the regime's "roadmap to democracy." The letter, signed by 92 MPs-elect, set forth an alternate seven-step roadmap to democracy and called on the UNSYG to pressure the Burmese regime to accept the proposals. U Aye

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Thar Aung speculated these detentions may be an attempt to coerce these men and others to abandon their proposal and publicly support the regime's plan.

U GAMBIRA UPDATE

¶8. (C) Legal activist Ko Nge Lay told us she spoke with the mother of detained monk U Gambira on November 20. According to Ko Nge Lay, U Gambira's mother declined an offer of assistance from a group of opposition lawyers saying she preferred to wait another month to see how her son's case develops. Ko Nge Lay also attempted to clarify an Irrawaddy report in which she was quoted saying that her son had been charged with high treason. She told our contact that, in fact, she said that she thought her son might be charged with treason, but clarified she did not know what charges, if any, had been leveled against him.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) The regime continues to systematically muzzle the opposition through arrest and intimidation. Now that Than Shwe escaped ASEAN scrutiny, he sees no need to follow through on commitments that Aung San Suu Kyi would be able to meet regularly with her party. These actions demonstrate that the Than Shwe regime has no intention of embarking on a genuine dialogue or opening up. His bet that he would be able to move forward on his plan without interference from the international community appears to be succeeding. End Comment.
VILLAROSA